

Greetings, House Education Committee,

My name is Jeremy Schmaltz. I live and work in District 42 and I am a parent and school board member who has chosen to enroll my child in St. Michael's Catholic School in Grand Forks, ND. I work as a clinical counselor in the area.

I support HB 1607, HB 1509, and HB 1540, but I am in support of all school choice bills that support parent autonomy and the right to provide an education for my child. I support HB 1607, HB 1509, and HB 1540 because having previous experience in both the public and private sector of education in my community as a former music educator, I believe that parents should have the right to choose where their tax dollars are allocated to provide their children with the best future they can provide. The public schools here in Grand Forks have chosen to include ideological content that is harmful to the natural development of elementary aged and middle school aged children. Kids are bullied for not being LGBTQAI + in GFPS. There has been a rise in kids who identify as transgender and non-binary ever since these policies have been adopted. Several students have gone as far as taking puberty blockers, have begun and nearly finished the process of transition. This is biologically and psychologically damaging on many levels, not to mention, banned in the EU. I find it sad that I must protect my child against this environment at my local public elementary school. As such, I do so voluntarily, but feel no other option but to send my child to a private institution. I personally choose a Catholic education for its rigorous academics, quality educators, the instillment of character and values that promote community service and leadership, and for its faith-based approach that aligns with our family's core values.

Having school choice will aid 100s of families in the Grand Forks area and 1000s throughout the state to have the ability to choose where their tax dollars go regarding their children's education, so that they can have the confidence and freedom that their tax dollars are being spent in accordance with their conscience and values. It also empowers the diversity of educational approach for those students who the traditional model of education does not work for.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1607, HB 1509, and HB 1540. In the United States, 11 states have universal private school choice programs, and 21 states have limited private school choice programs. It is time ND adopt these school choice programs to further empower its citizens and invest in the future of its children.

Thank you for your service to the state of North Dakota and your time on HB 1607, HB 1509, and HB 1540